

272
2/

Mirth's Madness,
OR, THE
VANITY
OF
Mens Laughter,¹²₁₀

AND OF
Their Merry Amusements in their Idle Hours.

Consider'd in a

SERMON
Upon Ecclesiastes II. 1, 2.

(Intended to have been Preached in St. James's Church in S. Edmunds-Bury, October the 8th, 1701. And now in Compensation of the undesign'd Disappointment that Day, for the use of those Persons of Quality and others, who resort to the Wednesday Lecture there.)

By EDWARD GROVE A.M. Rector of Chevington near Bury, ^R
in the County of Suffolk.

If I must needs Glory, I will Glory in the things which concern mine Infirmities, 2 Cor. 11. 30.

*Behold in my Trouble I have prepared for the House of the Lord,
—— And thou mayest add thereto 1 Chron. 12. 14.*

NORWICH, Printed for R. Watson, Bookseller in Bury, and T. Goddard, Bookseller in Norwich. 1702.

Wm. Lloyd Garrison

VANITY

Men's Lust

And of the Lust of the Flesh



SERMON

Upon Ecclesiastes II. 1, 2.

(intended to have been preached in St. James's Church in 1844, but was not, owing to the illness of the preacher, and now in consequence of the untimely disappearance of the MS. for the use of those persons of quality and others, who resort to the Westminster Lecture Library)

By EDWARD BROWN, A.M. Rector of Christ Church, Oxford, and in the County of Oxford.

If I must needs say, I will say in my tongue, which concern mine

honor, in my tongue, I will say, for the sake of the Lord, and in my tongue, I will say, for the sake of the Lord, and in my tongue, I will say, for the sake of the Lord.

AND BROWN, 10, FLEET STREET, LONDON. 1844.

T O
John Risby,

O F
Thorpe-Moore.

In the County of SUFFOLK, Esq;

SIR,

SINCE the time that I came first to the
Knowledge of your Person, I have
seen in you daily Instances of a Ge-
nerous Mind, and discern'd the Lustre of
such an unexampled Justice, and the va-
rious Acts of so Heroick a Friendship,
(especially toward my self) that all the
Opportunities of testifying my great
Respect, and of publishing my Acknow-
ledgment and Gratitude, are ever too few
to discharge any considerable part of my
own sense of them, or to unlade in any
decent manner your increasing Favours :
And therefore I have taken this among
the rest to tell the Censuring World, that

The Epistle Dedicatory.

I am not as yet wholly Friendless; which though it be more an *Encomium* on my self than you, inasmuch as they that know the exactness of your Judgment cannot think otherwise than that you have seen in the object of your Favour some Motives which to all Men else, are either perfectly none or unknown, I shall thus far justly render back to your self, to your own Praise, by declaring that you have in some particulars out-done the Belief of this Niggardly Age, and been so far above the ordinary rate of Kindness and Frugality in your true Caresses (as well in the Choice of Men utterly undeserving for them, as in the measure of them toward such; which exceed the common size, as *Saul's* Person did the common Stature by an whole Cubit) that I fear there will not be found many Brothers of your good meaning, should we search narrowly the stingy County.

But Sir, as to these Sheets (which I here present to you, as the due claim of your and your Ladies repeated Civilities, and as but a Symptom of an unseen, yet fervent

The Epistle Dedicatory.

fervent desire in me to both your Happiness :) they are a perſuasive Diſcourſe to one kind of Moderation, which undoubtedly ſhould have its Profeſſors as well as the reſt.

And I think the Subject may commend it ſelf to all Men, by being as neceſſary as it is ſomewhat particular and uncommon for a Treatiſe.

And I heartily wiſh, that the general Silence there has been among good Men on theſe Heads, was an *irrefutable Argument* (againſt the heinous Intemperance of Mens Mirth, which upon every light and frivolous Occaſion, extend not only to the *putting forth of the finger, and the ſpeaking Vanity,* but to *rudeneſs, prophaneſs, giddineſs, and what not*) that there is no great need for wiſe Mens ſifting into the depth of this uſeful Topick, tho' my Deſign in it here went wholly for an Act of Impertinence.

And for my weak way of handling it ; ſo it doth not appear to be in any part *unreaſonable, unſcriptural, or un-grammatical*, I am the leſs Sollicitous about it: tho' ſome Expreſſions (eſpecially ſuch as relate to the
empty

The Epistle Dedicatory.

empty bubbles, and gaudy vanities of this Life, about which we may be excused to be but indifferently affected and incurious) be somewhat uncouth, and contemptible, as the things themselves they signify are.

And Sir, I perswade my self, the whole will be the less slighted thro' the weakness of the Pen-man and his Reasonings, when it shall appear to have obtain'd with the Umbrage of your Name, your Approbation too.

In recommending it to which Service (next the good God may enable it to do among us all) I humbly give it into your Hand, and from that to the Publick, Praying that it may *Prosper according to the Integrity of the Design*; and upon your Self and your Lady for a constant serenity, and an Eternal Peace. And may your Joint-Happiness be as lasting as it is innocent, and as innocent as your Thoughts and Genius are ever Manly, which is the earnest desire of

*Sir, Your most unfeigned and faithful,
and most Humble Servant,*

Edward Grove

Chevington, Oct.
23d, 1701.

Ecclesiastes II. 1, 2.

I said in mine heart, go to now I will prove thee with Mirth, therefore enjoy Pleasure : and behold this also is Vanity. I said of Laughter, it is madness, and of Mirth, what doth it ?

THIS Book (which presents unto us the several Grave and Godly Experiences of the Royal and Wise Preacher, in almost all the different States and Conditions of Man's Life) seem to be the Product of his mature and ripper Years, and to have been drawn forth by him in those settled Reflections of his Soul upon Good and Evil, which took up his time in the solitary Musings of his latter days, when he was once again happily return'd from that horrid Idolatry, and wicked Apostacy from the Lord his God, whereunto his Multitude of Heathen and Superstitious Wives and Concubines had inticed him, and (to the disgrace of his Excellent Spirit of Wisdom and Knowledge) violently, as it were, obtain'd his Consent, and withdrawn him, in even the declining part and remnant of his Life : For whereas he had at the first set out in a most eminent degree and manner for the Glory of God, and had continued to adorn the Worship and Service of the Lord of Hosts (the God and Shield of David his Father) till past the bright Meridian of his days, with great Vigour ; and on all occasions had promoted solemnly the stedfast Reverence of one Spiritual and Inviible, Omniscient and All-powerful God, and (as having obtain'd from his Goodness a peerless Portion of his Heavenly Wisdom) set forth the Inviolable Truth of His Godhead, and of his natural Government over the Heaven and the Earth, and over all things VISIBLE and Invisible throughout the same, and that he especially had in his own *Israel* manifested forth his Jealousy, to be alone ador'd, void of any Superstitious

mixture of Idols with him : He it seems, for all this, laps'd wofully into that very sin, and species of Disobedience he had so highly (both in his Laws, and Life, and Actions) before discouraged, and by the weakness and folly of a Female Flattery, gave up himself to the Gods of the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, *Edomites*, *Zidonians* and *Hittites*, according to the Idolatry of his Wives and Concubines, and the pollutions of those Nations from whence they came forth, following (*viz.*) *Asheroth* the Goddess of the *Zidonians*, and *Milchom* or *Molech* the Abomination of the *Ammonites*, and building up an High-place for *Chemosh* the abomination of *Moab*, in the Hill before *Jerusalem* for them, and Sacrificing also unto their Gods with them, as we may read at large 1st of *Kings*, chap. 11. the first eight verses ; so that having (as it is conjectured from some Expressions and Intimations in these Books) in the end repented of this his wicked Folly, and return'd unto God with all his Heart, having seen the Vanity and Sinfulness of these his Misdoings, and before his Death return'd unto the purity of Worshipping his God again, he hath (as a monument of his dear-bought sence touching the many sorts and sizes of our Providences here, and the manner and method of our enjoying them) left us this serious sum of his own Experiences, and these fatal Proofs of the Evil and Vanity of all things here, even to the hazard of his Soul, made for us. In Examining the same therefore we may discern his eager desire to assert the truth unto us, his earnest and vehement Expostulations with us, to watch and avoid the dangerous Plagues of sensual Enjoyments, and in the whole, his hearty advices towards us, That we would be on our Guard evermore over our Affections, and beware how they lur'd and hunted after perishing things, and dwelt too long upon forbidden Objects, which alas! were (in what kind soever considered) even Vanities of Vanities, and a sore vexation of Spirit at last. For Instance he tells us, that Wisdom and Folly are both Vanities ; that Riches and Poverty are alike, what do not fill the mind of Man, that Honour and Dishonour are both Perishing, that a Posterity and no Second is in a manner alike inconveniency, or at least what may reasonably be alike esteem'd

Seem'd indifferent by us, and so on; that things past, and present, and future, (as to this Life) are but as one scene that shifts to and fro, and returns upon the earth over and over again for ever; that Novelty and Antiquity are the Fountains of all Desire in our Nature; and that therefore in short the Happiness of Man in this Life, is purely annexed to every man's own Person, to the state, and temper, and condition of our respective Spirits; and that, be the quality of our Predecessors never so good or evil, the manners of our Posterity never so incertain, the acquist of our own Labour and Wisdom never so great and good, and the waxing or declining of our Providences never so variable, it is to us that Live, and while we do Live, that the good or evil of the Earth do redound, and that according as God giveth us, to receive and to relish his Dispensations towards us and ours, so do the most solemn desirable things become to us; and as they affect us, in a way justifying before God with respect to another World, are made our Good and our Evil here. Besides there being this double Issue and Event of all things that are accidental, and no way of particular Necessity to man's Life in the Body (which indeed all outward things besides convenient Food and Rayment are) that they either rejoyce or grieve our Heart or Spirit, the Wise Man doth resolve both these fruits of things temporal upon us; namely, that we ought not to be Slaves and Prisoners of our Passions, and Disturbances, at our usual rate about them; but that we would rather bear every thing with an equal, and even, and calm Mind, and avoid the miserable estate of Fools and Worldlings, who are put upon by every light good and evil, and transported as it were by every ludicrous Object, either into excessive Mirths and Triumphs, or else into the deepest Sorrows, and most forlorn and abject Sence of our selves possible: For thus he tells us again and again, that nothing is better than for a man to enjoy himself and his enjoyments here, than to eat and drink, and to possess the Labour of his Hands with comfort, for that this is the great Gift of the Almighty, and proceeding undoubtedly from his most gracious and kindly

hand too; But then, lest by thus avoiding needless Sorrows, and by thus fleeing from the Face of unnecessary evils, we should run too far into the other extrem, lest we should decoy our Misery by a too eager and vehement pursuit of pleasure, lest we should think, that God permit us to Jovial away our Life, and to pass away our time in excessive wantonness, he tells us on that side, that there was folly and madness in that too, and that therefore it was his desire to be equally delivered from the snares of a Voluptuous Life also; as it is in the Text, *I said in mine heart, go to now I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure, and behold this is also Vanity. I said of Laughter it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?* In discoursing on which Subjects of the wise Man's Wisdom in this great Point, (as the sence of his words may be in these days of ours much more accommodated to the serious Duties of the Christian Faith, and to the incessant Exercise of our selves and of our souls in all the Godly and Sober acts of Religion, and in the continual Meditation on our Spiritual State) I shall make it my present business to do these two things following, (*viz.*)

First to set before you how unbecoming a thing it is to the Nature of Man, and how incoherent to the profession of a good Christian to prove his Heart with Mirth, to indulge himself (on any account) in the enjoyment of immoderate, and inordinate, and foolish Pleasures; how much more rational and blessed it is, to drive away our irksome thoughts by moderate reflections upon all things Vanity, and to content our Minds with the Religious sence of all things, folly and transitoriness hence, and so to enjoy our good without mixture of Evil; (there being this to be considered for the Relief of our Souls in all their Heaviness, that God is always higher than Man, and more powerful than the Devil; his foolishness wiser than Man's Wisdom, and his Weakness stronger than Man's Power, and therefore (so long as those his Glorious Attributes last) we need not ever flee to Excess and Riotousness, and to the idle and wicked Scenes of an unnecessary Jollity to Succour us but may comfort our selves
in

in a pious way against all our Transitory Evils now, and in a sober Thanksgiving entertain moreover our greatest and highest Transports and Blessings here.)

Secondly, To show you, that we especially ought to eschew the madness of violent Transports, and to consider the insignificancy of a worldly Mirth, and so to rejoyce wisely in all our Labour, in as much as there are always great Dangers in an excessive Revelling, and the very nature of such a mirth is madness, and therefore the end of it must be heaviness, even as the greatest Portions of it while it actually lasteth, are but so many vain and unprofitable Rants of Folly, and what might better have been supplied by pious Meditations and holy Praises, for and upon every of the chearful Dispensations of God towards us in this Life, and chiefly above all things for the manifold Goodness of our Redemption it self, and for all the ineffable Mystery thereof, in order to our enjoying God, (the greatest of all good things) and the exceeding, and eternal weight of his Glory in the next.

First then, he that do but look abroad into the World, and consider seriously the face of Affairs in it, and how upon every frivolous pin the affections and habits of Men are daily turn'd, will be apt (at least, if he be not already well settled in his Principles, and somewhat wisely establish'd upon the General Knowledge of the word of God touching Religion) to Conclude, that doubtless the Humane Life is a perfect Farce, and Drama, and mock-stage, and Theater of Entertainment amongst us, devised and erected for the alone Play, and Sport, and Pastime of Mankind, and for the Exhibition of a continued scene of Pleasure on Earth, wherein every one Acts his part, and (according to the variety of the matter in hand; and to the Frame and Model of the whole Comick Representation) sets forth the various Figment of Man's Good and Evil in this Life, beyond which there is deemed to be no farther

farther prospect, nor any design of GOD or Man to reach, but that the whole Race of Risible Beings may lead the *Leviathan's* Life here, and at Death be removed into the *Asylum* of the Grave (as behind the Curtain of an Eternal Night and Darknes) and thence for ever be no more seen. For though indeed there are to be found among us the serious Subjects of Tragedy, and the deep matter of Man's great Misery, which doth excite the Tears and Lamentations of all Spectators; though we have scenes of horror and woe before us, bloody Conflicts and Death, in all sorts and of all sizes with us; and withall, the fatal danger of an eternal and endless Calamity, ever in our sight and made possible to us: though there is matter enough for our Heroick vertues in our Life and for the exercise of all the serious and solid parts of our Nature within us: yet if we take the generality of men together, we shall find, that (with the most) all these things serve only to ridicule and mockery, to excite the Risibility of our Species, and to promote the Mirth and Madness of the Earth; that our Joy (in the main) prevail over our Sorrow, and our ludicrous above our serious thoughts; that we are apt to run away with every thing that is Mirthful and Jocular, and to take up with *some* of the wise Man's Conclusions, (which perhaps we do not understand or consider as we ought, but to be as forgetful of that serious Lesson and Caution of his, which he hath repeated so often to us, (and that in a kind of asseveration) that we cannot fail to discern its sence and meaning fully, (*viz.*) that *all is Vanity of Vanities*, and a very Vanity, yea a sore Evil, and an hideous vexation of Soul to us, and as the Prophets sad Scroll, wherein was written within and without *Lamentation, and Mourning, and Wo for us.*

And, if we consult the common Practices of the World, we must acknowledge that Heaviness and Joy have no equal Portion and Dividend among us, but that we rather incline and exceed, to fill our selves with the Vanity of
such

such as would (if they could) keep Holy day for ever; that we are for putting the evil day far from our minds, and for Rejoycing in all that we put our hand unto, for removing sorrow from our Hearts, and for putting away evil from our flesh, and for concluding with Solomon, that *nothing is better*: But at no time (if possible) for sitting down seriously by the waters of Babylon, and like the Captive Israelites, for hanging up our Harps unstrung and solitary upon the Trees by us; We are never for the Psalmist's Mourning, but all for his Musick; neither say we (in our Hearts at any time) *Wo unto us that we are constrained to dwell with Measeck, and to have our habitation among the Tents of Kedar, and that long hath our soul dwelt among those that are Enemies unto Peace*; Nor with those Innocents under the Altar, *How long Lord, Holy and True, dost thou not judge and revenge, &c!* but (unlike the Prophets and Primitive Martyrs) we are all for lying down upon Beds of Ivory, and stretching our selves on Couches for our Ease, for eating and drinking the fat and the pleasant (with those in the Prophet) yea and for Chaunting and Dancing to the sound of the Viol, and for Inventing to our selves Instruments of Musick like David.

Ecclef. 13, 10.

Ch. 1. 24.

Psal. 137. 1, 2.

Psal. 120. 5, 6.

Rev. 6. 10.

Amos 6. 4, 5, 6.

Matth. 24. 38.

Now there being sin and evil generally in all Excesses, and if a Man live many years and rejoyce in them all, it being his Duty still to remember the days of Darkness which are many, and to consider the several Perils Spiritual which attend on a careless Sojourning in the Body, even as the Flood did on that negligent Generation, which in the days of Noah, *Eat and Drank, and Married, and were given in Marriage, and Planned, and Buildeed, and rejoyced, and indulged themselves unto all satiety, in the Things and perishing Enjoyments of this Life*; (till the hasty Deluge came and swept them all at once away with it) it's upon this account, that we have some few intimations in Scripture, that we may not too far give up our selves to the abundance of Ease and Luxury;

that

that we would not Delight in the vanity of Mirth and Laughter, nor be given over wholly to the Life and Drollery of Fools and Ideots; but that we rather would be serious and full of thought, Dedicated to Holy and Pious Speculations, to grave and useful Conferences, to a daily Communing with our own Heart, and in our Chamber silently, to a State of Holy and Heavenly mindedness, and to an active, but not over-light and frolicksome Degree of passing the appointed time of our Sojourning here in God's fear, and of putting our selves every day more and more into a fitness, and sober Capacity for those most solid Pleasures at GOD's Right Hand provided for us.

For sure enough the Heart of Man is not to be given over to Voluptuousness, or to the General Indulgence of his Carnal and Luxurious Appetite; Certainly he is not to pass the time of his Life in Ranterism and Riotousness, he is not to solicit the Pleasures of sense to himself, nor to stir up the sensual and old unmortify'd Man in him; but (whether things go well or ill with us) we are chiefly to regard the great Doctrines of Mortification and Self-Denial; we are strictly to watch over our Liquorish Affections, and to subdue at all times our depraved Natures; we must not think, that we are Servants of the God of this World, and to offer in Sacrifice the Delicacies of the Creation to our Palate, the choicest Viands of the Earth's product (in abundance) to our brutal part, or to sit down (as the Lussful Israelites did) to eat and to drink, and like them afterwards rise up to play.

No! It is not permitted to us Christians, to Celebrate the Bacchanalia of the Heathen in our Love-Feasts of the Gospel, or to mingle out a Meat-offering (Spic'd with the Baits of Surfeiting and Excess) to the Queen of Heaven; but as we shall have Learn'd Christ (the Great Exemplar of Meekness, and Patience, and Abstinency, and
of

of a Mortified Life of Contentment in Poverty, and of a Moderation in the Greatest Heights and Spiritual Comforts which himself had) so must we walk after even him, in subduing continually the Flesh to the Spirit, in putting on moderate and stinted Desires after bodily things, in always enjoying the pleasures of sense with great Parsimony and Sparingness of Affection, with a very indifferency of Love, and with the utmost Modesty conceivable in us. Col. 1. 6.

For, since we are Compound Beings, and have a Two-fold Nature and Manhood about us, since we have an outward and an inward Man belonging to us; Since the Flesh and the Spirit are of a divers Temper and Constitution, each from the other, there will be a Law in our Members warring against the Law of our Minds; and as we suffer the things of this Life, or of the next, to take a part with either of them two, so will they respectively prevail upon, and become a mighty Bias, and strong Propention in the midst of us. Rom. 7. 23.

As for Example, the Cares, and Fears, and Sorrows of this World, and the Deceitfulness of Riches, the Disquietudes and Anxieties of Life, and the pains and agonies of, and concerning future Providences, and the like, will be driving us to solitary and comfortless thoughts, and to an irksome State of Being in the Body; and in short, (if we beware not,) the more we increase our Portion of Good and Evil, the more we shall increase our Grievs, and tempt God to lay us waste, and to desolate us in earnest, that so we may feel sufficient Causes for our daily regrets, and lament for somewhat our Condition here.

As also (on the other hand) if we are not fore-guarded against the opposite Perils of Wealth, and the increase of Temporal Blessings, and of the great overflow of things desirable upon us, we shall be lifted up and swell with inward Vanity, and be ready to exceed the Bounds and

Limits of reasonable Joy, and perhaps to sing that sordid Voluptuary's Requiem to our Soul, *Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many Years, eat, drink, and be merry*, whereof the Gospel warns us, St. Luke 12, 15. 19. Wherefore for the prevention of all this in us, as the Wisdom and Goodness of God have provided us means of being Contented in any of the worst of Providences upon us, and of our alway holding and possessing our Souls with Patience, when the heaviest Adversity, and bitterest Cup of Evil assails us, (namely, by having told us, that God will never leave us nor forsake us, that the fashion of this World passeth away daily, and that our selves are going hence in a moment from it; that there is no solid good in this Life, that our Wisdom, and our Wealth, and our Labour, and our Travail, and our greatest Afflictions also, are all alike perishing, and that therefore we may not sorrow, as without hope, for the utmost Portion of Evil that befalls us at present :) so are we (at the same time) by the full Power of the Grace of God over us, admonished not to abound in the highest pitch of a secular Grandeur or Happiness, but to keep down our natural Arrogancy, to subdue our Pride and Haughtiness, and to repel the vain Luxuriousness of a foolish Mirth.

For (Restraining the Discourse to this Head hence-forward) is it not a thing very unsuitable to the sober Profession of Christianity, and to the very humble Frame and Disposition of a Disciple of Jesus's new Created and Circumcised Heart, to prove and yield it self up to Mirth, to dedicate any part of its time to vain and fruitless Pastime and Jollity, and to indulge and satiate the Flesh with Vanity? is it not against the Manhood and Gravity of our Reason, to spend our Days and Hours in the Songs and Gambols of this World's Harmony, and in the ungrateful while-times of this World's Joys?

If we obtain a Blessing (of any sort) doth it not (as every good and perfect Gift) come down from above, and from that Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning? and as such doth it not require Spiritual and Holy Hosannah's unto him? doth it not call for Psalms of Praise, and Odours of Thanksgiving, and the highest Acknowledgment of Soul possible? Jam. i. 17

But are they not to be the Product of our Inward and Invisible Zeal? do they not wholly deserve to be performed in a way of Solemn Devotion and Religious Worship, and after a manner becoming the Majesty of him whose Dwelling is alway in the silent and peaceful Regions above? Or if we must break forth to the publick Exercises of our Cheerful Faculties, have we not received Engagements enough to be Holy and Heavenly-minded towards God, to put on the Temper and Constitution of Persons Redeem'd from the Power of Hell, and Ransom'd from the prison of an Everlasting Grave, and of Partakers of an Holy and Endless Grace and Glory with us?

Now if so, then there are Topicks enough (in our Consciences) to be Celebrated in a way of Sober and Devotional Laud, in a constant setting forth the Goodness, and Wisdom, and Power of God towards us, and in our singing forth private and publick Magnificates of Praise unto the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, that High and lofty One that Inhabiteth Eternity, and that ever ador'd and undivided *Three*, whose Rays of Purity have again and again broken forth, and shin'd upon us, and therein bound us under an invincible and three-fold Cord of Duty, to dwell in the fear of our God with Joy, and in both our Good and Evil to sing Praise unto him.

But alas! for us to seek Refuge from our Solitary and Disquieting Thoughts, in the doleful Remedy of this

ἐὺλα-
πίδια,
which
seems to
signify the
love plea-
sure, and
great Ele-
gancy and
turn of wit
& nothing
worse.
Ecclef.

7. 2.

Ver. 16.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Prov. 14.

5.

World's Mirth, to divert our selves and our sorrows, by mingling with them that keep the Guilty Carnival on Earth, and by Solemnizing our Festivals after the foolish Liberty of an Epicurean Joy: For us to Dedicate our Time to foolish Talking and Jesting, which an Apostle hath told are not Convenient, *Ephesj. 5. 4.* For us, to inure our selves to the Society of the wanton and riotous, and to take our part in the Laughter of Fools; and briefly for us, to sit down and Coin ludicrous Sports and Pastime to our selves, and our Associates to study vain Divertissements, and consult the more easy and thoughtless wearing of our Life out, in a sin, which as it Disgraceth so doth it also destroy our Nature, and bring upon us a Vanity and a Folly full of anguish, and vexation at last. Hereunto therefore the wise Man Notes, that it is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting; (for that the former is the end of all men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart) that Sorrow is better than Laughter, (in that by the sadness of the Countenance the Heart is made better) that the Heart of the wise Man is in the House of Mourning, but the Heart of Fools is in the House of Mirth; yea, that it is better to hear the Rebuke of the wise, than for a Man to hear the very Song of Fools; and lastly, that as is the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot, so also is the Laughter of Fools, and that the same also is Vanity; as also, that even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful still, and that the end of Mirth is Heaviness.

The meaning of which is plainly this, that God when he made Man Ridible, made him not thereby of a Temper Necessarily to be Exercised in the Mirth and Madness of the Foolish World; but (as we see, *Prov. 14. 10.*) gave him an Heart to understand and relish his own Comforts, and withal a Soul to moderate and preserve him from all excess; that a sober and religious Habit of Considering our ways, is more Connatural to us (as we are rea-
sonable

sonable Creatures, than the senseless Levity of Con-
versing like Apes, in the Laughter and mutual Ridicule of
one another, and of one anothers Actions; and that of a
certain, God accepteth us more readily when we weigh dis-
creetly the benefit of his Favours, when we meditate the
Nature of his Gifts and Blessings, when we call to our
Mind the Day of our Death, and the approach of Judg-
ment, and thereout do behave our selves as becometh
Saints, and as is seemly for such who are not Disciples
of the merry *Thracian*, nor profess'd to be Followers of
Democritus's Fancy, but Baptized into a Saviour that Re-
nounced this World, and yet kept his Countenance, and
gravely dwelt as in the Valley of the Shadow of Death
in it: Who are incorporated into a Christ who often sigh-
ed and wept, not so much as once (in all his Life) smiled:
Yea, and who are the Disciples of him, who tho' he Re-
joyced, Rejoyc'd in God; and as to the Mirths and ma-
nifold Vanities of our Triumphs and Excesses, of our Tran-
sports and empty Parades, and of our Comforting one
another in a way of social refreshment, and Release from
the Troubles of Life, knew them not.

But then Secondly, Having thus far insisted on the ex-
tream Vanity and Wickedness of our having our Conversa-
tion amidst our Pleasures, and of our too violent indulg-
ing our selves, unto the short and momentary Recrea-
tions of Sense, we may now proceed to the unreasona-
bleness, and unprofitableness, and utter Madness of such
Practices; which the wise Man Argues from himself, and
from his own most fatal Experience of things, who had
tasted the utmost extent of all things, any way appen-
dant to this World's Vanity, or to the Pomp, and Pride,
and Pleasure of it: of which this is his Positive Inference,
and Result at once, *I said of Laughter is is mad, and of
mirth what doth it?* That is, "I have observed the ways
and manners of Men; and they are in them like perfect
Children"

“ Children tossed to and fro, In their Affections, they
“ are presently lifted up on high, by means of the least
“ and most trifling good which they enjoy, and they are
“ as soon cast down at the lightest sorrow and affliction
“ too, they find their Grievs and Miseries a Burthen to
“ them, and they make their Mirths and their Rejoy-
“ cings the same; they have indeed a mixed Portion of
“ Good and Evil, and they are as diversly affected and
“ wrought upon by it; sometimes they are aloft in their
“ Pride of Heart, for this or that successful Enterprize,
“ sometimes they are Groveling on the Earth, because of
“ their Trouble, their Heart melteth like Wax in them,
“ through very Heaviness; and they are ever like a Wave
“ in the Sea, shaken and tossed amidst their Joys and sigh-
“ ings; but a mean and middle sort of Carriage is the
“ most wise and approved, and heavenly in them; For if
“ they take their Disappointments to Heart, and vex and
“ disquiet themselves for the Evil that befalls them, then
“ every thing (around them) brings Vanity and Vexation of
“ Spirit upon them; then the past, and the present, and
“ the future, are all a Load of irksome and disconsolate
“ Meditations upon them, and (on the other hand) if they
“ seek to forget their Misery, by their sinful ways of
“ Mirth and Jollity, if they would drown their Cares in
“ Draughts of Intemperance, and in the Turgid Bowls
“ of Excess and Riot: if they would give themselves over
“ to the Charms and Opiates of Society, and of the herd-
“ ing themselves among the tumultuous sinners of the
“ Earth: if they believe they can hide themselves (from
“ themselves) in the Multitude of Evil doers, and there-
“ fore do determine to indulge themselves in sinful and
“ pleasant while-times, and to immerse themselves into
“ depths of Sensuality, and into the heavy Vanity of much
“ Laughter, and therein think *to live*, (as they call it) and
“ *to be happy* more fully: Surely the Case is equally dange-
“ rous and fearful with them; their Remedy is desperate
“ as their Disease; they do (as it were) drink Poyson
“ for

“ for their Health, and seek their Quiet in the midst of
“ the Sea, which rageth and foameth horribly about them;
“ for I my self have (on the Throne of *Israel*) tasted and
“ seen all the Pleasures of Sense: I have tried and found-
“ ed to the bottom all the possible Excellency of a se-
“ cular, and worldly, and sensual Life; and surely Laugh-
“ ter it self is but Madness and Folly, surely Mirth and
“ its Concomitants are the veriest Vanity, and Fleeting
“ Shadow imaginable in us.

So that (this being the Preachers evident sense and mean-
ing in the place before us) doth it not plainly forewarn
us, that our greatest and highest Transports of Joy, are
as a blast that kindles up a Fire and Flame of Wrath to
Devour us, that our Mirth is unprofitable to any Holy
and Spiritual End in us, and that death and heaviness at-
tends our Jollity; that darkness and horror are spread
over our lightsomest Frolicks, and senseless Requiems which
we delight in among Men; and briefly, that our unsancti-
fied Joys are but as the deceitful Voices of *Sirens* to us;
which that they are indeed, and what do bring upon us
either a swift or slow Punishment at last, what must cost
us many a sore and heavy Astonishment of Soul, and a
thorough and earnest Repentance and Loathing in our latter
End: that they are unreasonable in themselves, and upon
us pour forth the most bitter Gripping and Relentings at
last: that they are void and empty of any intrinsick Ex-
cellency, and what diverts us but for a while, and leaves
in us a sting and bitterness in the end: And that they are
such an Employment of our precious Moments of Life
(whereon depends our Eternity) as must needs create a
Guilt in us, and raise up several evil Accusations (in our
Consciences) against us, and (after they are past) either in
our Health sometimes, or assuredly when our vain desire
after them is once a little coold, at our times of Languish-
ing and Solitariness, on a Bed of Sickness, or at the ap-
proach of Death, what will make us ashamed fully and
tormented

tormented on their Account, what will cause us to hang down our Heads, and to become deeply abashed for them; I say, that our idle and foolish Meriments, and the Laughter and Madness of our Life, are what do bring Guilt and Heaviness, and Repentance, and many a sour Regret and sharp Reflections in our Consciences, and at least some shrowd Reproof of our having mismanaged so many good Opportunities, and mispent so much precious time in madness, we may easily inform our selves, by considering a little the Nature of Man, as he is a reasonable Creature, and the requisite Sobriety of his Life, as he is a Christian, and the Contrariety of an Apish and Humersome, and over-Chearly Conversation and Carriage to all this, and consequently the needful Watch over our selves concerning it, and our diligent restraining therefrom (as much as possible) for the preserving to our selves the Manhood of our make, and for the Delivering our Souls from the Danger of Sin, and for the laying up for our selves a sure and reasonable Foundation (in hope) of a more solid and unshaken Joy hereafter.

Hoc est
viverebis
vita posse
priori
frui.

For Example, tho' I am not of those Mens Mind who think that dullness is Sobriety, that inactivity and Mopishness is a sign of Grace (where it goeth) and that every smile and glance is a sin in a Christian; that we must Necessarily become Men in Prudence and in Understanding even before we can arrive at the years of such Discretion, and that we must absolutely plant Gray Heads upon Green Shoulders, or else no hope of Redemption for such Reprobated, and such wild-Olive-seeds as we are: I say, tho' we need not tie up Men to this Degree of impossible Perfection, nor after this strict sence require of all that profess Christianity, the demure and incessant Speech and Gesture; which do indeed become all, and in an especial manner ought to be the inseparable Companion of some Mens Life above others: and
tho'

tho' neither need we devote our selves to a Monastick Life (which consists wholly in Mortification and Silence, and Corporal Austerities) nor Live and Dye in Caves and Grotto's (as some have done) and like the pure Nazarites drink only Water: but may innocently air our selves and our Notions now and then, and Communicate ^{semel in Anno ii-} our diverting thoughts to one another liberally sometimes: ^{det Apot-} yea, and withal even under St. Paul's Approbation to his lo-
dearly beloved Son Timothy, *occasionally use a little Wine*: 1 Tim. 6. 33.
Yet I say, (notwithstanding all this, if we look in-
to our selves) we must discern, that (be our manner of sensual and frolicksome Living what it will, and let us be led to it by what means and opportunities soever, and our pretence to excuse it never so just and plausible) our inordinancy of Laughter and Mirth is Madness, and our Excessive Jollity unprofitable, and our indulgency therein neither wise, nor prudent, nor religious, nor *circumspect*, (as the Apostle's phrase and meaning is) but ^{Ephes. 5. 15.} wholly a neglect of some better things doing in the interim, and what must cost us in the end, either a general abhorrency, or at least a most Diligent and earnest Reformation of our selves in it.

For do our Frame and Make, declare us for the only Mimicks and Pageants of the Creation? Is our Reason subservient to the sensitive Merriment of the Brute in us? Or can we adjust it to our Consciences, that we lay aside our Religion, and lay out our selves in the foolish Gambols and Jollity of sensual and worldly minded Men? Be our Condition and Providences what they can, may we not more profitably divert our Sorrows and mingle our Mirths, in the Sacred Entertainment of the Word and Sacraments, and in the solacing Festivals of Spiritual Comforts, in the cheerful Praises of a Creator's Bounty, and in the Noble Discovery of a Saviour's Love, than by setting our selves apart unto Scenes of Rioting and Excess, unto a foolish sharpening of our Wits upon one
D another,

another, unto ſinful Exerciſes, and diſtaſtful Rencounters, and then by proving our Fleſhly Hearts with Mirth, and bidding them to take their fill of vain Pleaſure? Whether we receive Good or Evil from the hand of God, have we at any time need of diſſolving our Afflictions by Criminal Reſhments, or of Celebrating our Comforts by guilty Praises and Rejoycings among us? Or doth it not rather become us to be Chearful in all Evil towards God, and for all our good to render the Nobleſt Praises unto him?

And whereas we are Creatures of but an uncertain continuance in the Body, and at beſt of but a ſhort time, and withal, having much Religious Work to do in it; whereas our Infancy, and Childhood, and Youth, are all Vanity, and but as the unripe Fruit of Piety in us; whereas our old Age is attended frequently with many avocations from our Duty, with the tedious hindrance of our own Infirmities, and with the conſtant Irkſomneſs of ſeveral heavy and almoſt inſupportable Maladies; and whereas there are alſo about our mid-age too many ſecular and burthenſome Cares and Sorrows, too violent Temptations to cleave unto Mammon wholly, or to follow the Poms and Vanities of the Froathy World, and to immerſe our ſelves fully into the guilty and noxious Pleaſures of ſence; Is it not a Doctrine alway very ſeaſonable, that we would at all times bear a ſober and Religious Mind Heaven-ward? that we would endeavour to ſavour of the Heavenly and ſerious Diſpenſation of Chriſtianity, and not fare as if we were bitten of ſome *Tarantula*? that we would carry our ſelves in a Method of great Moderation and Abſtinency, from the Idle Toys and Buſſoonry of Life, and as it were ſeparated to the choiceſt Pleaſures of Religion and Goodneſs, ſo to be furthering our great and immortal Crown of Glory to us, and our more full and innocent Triumphs hereafter; for and upon even all the Goodneſs and Benefits of our God towards us, in the Society of Cherubims

bims and Seraphims, and amidst the Spirits of just Men (in the Divine Minificency) already made perfect?

Yea, Is not the Exercise of our Reason the Moral Perfection of our Humane Nature? Is not the Deportment of our selves (Body and Soul, at all times, and in all places) to as to answer the end of the Gospel of Christ, and to give up our Account of every Word and Deed with Joy, and not with Grief, at the final Arbitration of Souls in Judgment, the Perfection of our Religious State Mortal? Is not a Friendly and wise Converse and Communication of our selves to one another, in our Life, the great design of our Civil Compacts, and Constitutions upon Earth, into Bodies, and Societies, and Fraternities, and Neighbourhoods, and Friendships here? do not Sobriety and a moderate Carriage of our selves, and ordering of our Affections commend us to both God and man? and are we not to be Examined and to give up an Account of our Stewardship, and of every *idle word* hereafter? When we pity any in earnest, that seem over-joyful in their own Misery, do we not ever kindly indulge them the Imputation of a Frenzy? Or shall we be Jolly, and be able to flier and Jeer, and to be vainly mirthful, and exceedingly pleasant still (think we) when death cometh upon us? when the sound of the last Trumpet shall be blown full in our very faces, and when we shall have the dreadful Objects of Universal Judgment, and of all the doleful Calamities of Damnation within sight? Is there nothing in this World nor in the next that we feel or fear to damp our Spirits? Is there nothing relating to Friends and Fortunes (their and our) or in sin and in Judgment, that will avail to quail our Mirth, or to quench or abate our Juvenile heat in us? If not, surely enough the very notion of Happiness then doth so please us, that we are contented to give away our Eternity for a Song and miserable Lullaby, and to be even lead to Hell it self, for Societies sake only. However, let us weigh the dangerous Enterprize by our Reason first, and by that determine like Men thereof.

Now if so, then since (as we have seen) there is neither Wisdom, nor true Fellowship, nor Godliness in our Excessive Mirths: our ridiculous Manners of Conversing like Fools, and Apes, and Idiots, our finding no Subjects for Discourse or Arguments in Society, but what move and suggest the Laughter of others, our railing Disputes of an Antick Nature, our quaffing our selves into Objects of Scorn and ridicule, our forms of Flattery (empty and vain as they usually are) our foolish talking and jesting, and lightness of Behaviour, our Filthiness and Ribaldry (whereof we might be ashamed) our vagrant Discourses and fanciful Language on this or that Trifle or Notion, our gallantry and height of Romancing (to omit hateful Species many more) our administering to anothers, or provoking our own vain Mirth; and shortly, our abuses of our selves, and of our Blessings, of our time, and of our Fellowship with Men, unto fruitless and frivolous ends and purposes, are together the veriest Madness, and criminal and impious Pastime possible in us.

For where is the Edification unto Godliness in the mean time? where is the Self-Examination and serious Reflection on our future and Eternal State and Condition? where is the common desire of one anothers welfare in this and the other Life? where is the worth and price of our Souls considered in all this? where is the earnest Solicitousness which we ought to put on touching the making our Calling and Election sure? where is our Charity and fervent Love of the Brethren? where is our mindfulness of them that suffer Affliction, as being our selves also in the Body, and as bound in the Cords of a Common Humanity and Misery with them? where is the due looking up to God daily? our rendring to him the praises of our Life, and all the Cheerful Moments of our time? and where is the stupendous work of our Redemption thought on, and considered, and weighed sufficiently in all this by us?

In short, since in the madness of Man's Mirth all these great and excellent Duties are forgotten, since (as we are warned (if we suffer our Hearts to be over-charged (any way) with the fatal Dalliances of this Life; there is a danger lest that day come

upon

upon us *unawares*, when the Wrath of the Almighty shall burn like a fiery Oven over us, and at that time we shall find it hard to escape, if we (like the rich Glutton) have had our Portion of good already in this Life, let us be advised (while it may pro-^{Luke 16.} fit us) to Reform the error of our Minds touching this, as far^{25.} as possible, and to Redeem the time because the days are evil upon us. Let us remember, that these are the days wherein^{Ephes 5, 16.} our Bridegroom is already actually taken away from our Head, and that therefore they are to be days of Fasting and Mourning, and Solitude to us; yea, tho' we anoint our head, and wash our^{Luke 5.} face, and appear not unto men, but unto God alone, so to live^{35.} and dye in them.

Let us not squander away our Life in meer Gewgawes of delight, nor perill among them that are fatted as against a day of slaughter upon Earth; but let us observe, that one of the evils which this sin is a leading to (among many) is, that by the just Judgment of God it is made an inlet to a general Prophaness in Sacred things, and that by an habit in this Folly and customary Levity, men commonly learn to become light and wicked in their Behaviour under the Administration of the most Sacred parts of reveal'd Religion, and can scarce refrain their putrid Gibes, and unsavory Punnings in, or I fear sometime upon, their very Instruction to forbear; and from hence let us be induced, if we are sorrowful, to call in to our aid, the chearful Solaces of Religion among us; and if we Rejoyce, to Rejoyce in and unto that which is becoming Christians, namely, in the Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, and most undeserved kindness and mercifulness of God through *Jesus* his well-beloved Son towards us.

To Conclude, taking this along with us, that it ought to be highly resented, and indeed generally taken ill by all good men (on the behalf of our great and common Creator, Wisdom and Grace both) that the sober Christian, and the Hypochondriack should be made *Synonymous* by this Impudent Age; in as much as it looks like objecting shame to the Creation, and to be a reviling of God himself, so to vilify the natural Modesty and Sobriety of Mankind; and that one of the most blessed moral^{Virtues}

Virtues and Graces of the mind, should be with us ranked among the Diseases of the Body; which impiety (unless we should contradict; hereby that Petition in our Lord's Prayer, *Thy Kingdom come*, may) I think, justly create a Clause in our (to wit) that this Generation may first pass away, before the rest of the Moral Virtues be fill'd and esteem'd (as by this we see they already begin to be) enermities of Nature: I say, taking this Note along with us; and so proportionably on other Heads, strengthening our selves unto the highest practice of all things serious and sober-natur'd: let us not esteem our selves entertain'd (hereby) with a Cynical and Satyrical Discourse only, but so dispose our selves from it, in our respective Lives and Conversations, in our truest sense of good and evil upon us, and in that delightful manner live before God and man, & with one another now, as that we may be neither vain nor unthankful, neither comfortless in our Affliction, nor over-luxurious in our Joys, but considering, that the Voice of Mirth and Gladness, the Voice of the Bridegroom and of the Bride, and all pleasant things shall one day cease from even the dwellings of the Righteous, and much more from the Tents of the ungodly; (when all Faces shall gather Blackness, and we shall all, both Bodies and Souls hereafter together meet, in the pale horror and terror of our Universal doom;) that for all our Rejoycing (as the wise Man hath told us) *Judgment must come upon us*; and that therefore, our sins must be now Lamented and forsaken, and our sore Temptations all over-come, since (as we find by that wor) after all our Mirth, Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, shall be even unto Eternity it self upon us, if we have not (before God) been truly sober and heavenly-minded. And therefore (fleeing the dangers of an excessive and unsanctified mockery of Praise) let us resolve (in such times at least as ours, on all accounts are, times of publick Doubts and Incertainties, times of publick sins and visitations) to lament, while the inconsiderate World rejoyceth, that so afterward we may, (while that weepeth) for ever exult in the truest Joys: true in themselves, perfect, and pure, and true unto us, and that chiefly (among many other Reasons great and good) because those

our

our Joys (not volatile, and airy, and momentarious as these here, but permanent, and constant, and wholly fixed, serene, and heavily, and without all soil) can (if we believe our Blessed Saviour's own Promise, or his great Apostles vehement Perswasion) neither Man nor Angel, Life nor Death, Principalities nor Powers, things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other Creature, separate us from, or abate, or diminish in us, or remove farther off, or take, either by fraud, or by power away from us. Unto which State of Eternal Peace, may the God of all Comfort, (of his infinite Favour) bring us all in, and for, and through the Merits of Jesus Christ the Righteous, our alone Saviour, To whom with the Father and the holy Spirit, be ascribed (as is most humbly due from us) all Glory and Honour, Laud, and Praise, Power, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

Rom. 8.
:8, 39.

FINIS.

18 JA 53

 $40 = 11 = 05$

496 : 11 : 62

70 : 11 : 40

1875

202204

13 = ω

CC AL 81